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The student teaching process may have features which actually interfere with the processes of learning. Many student teachers revealed in interviews that they went through humiliation, trauma, and disenchantment with teaching in their interactions with cooperating teachers, with other school personnel, and with children in the student teaching experience. This psychological turmoil is parallel to Van Gennep's theory of transition (THE RITES OF PASSAGE) in which drastic change in social status is handled in a three-phased way: separation from the previous context (the sense of disenchantment and loss of idealism shown by student teachers), transformation of individual social attributes and behavior (the adoption of new priorities by the student teacher), and reincorporation of individuals into the social group (the graduation to the teaching profession of the student teacher). A harsh induction into a new role may submerge the idealism of a student, or it may force his acceptance of a new reality (a coming to terms with the mythology in his beliefs) leading to his acceptance of new, more pragmatic beliefs. A study should be made to determine how damaging this transitional period is to the indoctrination which has taken place in teacher training colleges. (SM)

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RITES OF PASSAGE AND TEACHER TRAINING PROCESSES

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The stated purpose of practice teaching is to introduce persons who are planning to be teachers to teaching. Typically this happens in the senior year of the college student who has majored in education. The intention is to give the student a chance to actually do some teaching while, at the same time, getting the benefit of evaluation by experienced teachers. On the face of it, the purpose is to let the student put into practice some of the things she has learned, and to try her skills at handling a class of children. All this sounds rational enough. In actuality things do not seem to be quite so rational. My thoughts are based on interviews with selected persons who are doing or have done practice-teaching; I have not done a full-scale survey of practice-teaching (for example, I have not talked with supervisors of practice-teachers, nor is my present sample chosen for randomness). Hence, my remarks must be regarded as provisional; the main purpose is to raise some issues rather than present a thoroughly completed set of findings. I shall try to link up with ideas about rites of passage that were presented by Arnold Van Gennep.[1] I shall first present some of the reactions of student-teachers to their experiences; then I shall try to interpret these in terms of a sociological view of role transitions.

Obviously a good deal of real learning about teaching goes on in the student-teaching situation. I shall, however, concentrate on those features that are not obvious, on features that may actually interfere with the officially conceived process of learning. Some of these are that student-teachers, at least those whom I interviewed, go through a good deal of humiliation, trauma, and disenchantment with teaching. This

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[1] The Rites of Passage, Transl. by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabriella L. Caffee; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

comes about in interactions with teachers who supervise the trainee, with other school personnel, as well as with children. Here are some of the thoughts and remarks by student-teachers:

> The student-teacher feels excluded from the school's teachers and her idealism receives severe jolts: "As a non-initiated member of the teaching profession, I expected exculsion from the in-group, but not quite so completely..."
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> "I am frustrated and helpless...teaching per se is not a criterion for acceptance by these people /the teachers/; but 'being a teacher' is...(and 'being a teacher') constitutes a pile of rubbish that rarely hits upon any treasure involving communication with students or care for their experiences...(it involves) not taking students seriously..."
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> "Where do I feel that I, as a student-teacher fit (in the school)? Nowhere within the system. I feel my situation is analogous to a foreign element either being rejected -- being spit out -- or being forcibly assimilated to the system which accepts only that which will keep it in running condition. Hopefully I am not being assimilated..."

Humiliating experiences start on the student-teacher's first day at the school: They may include the principal's refusal to let her use the teacher parking lot, being mistaken for a student, being told how to speak and dress by her supervising teacher -- "don't say 'yeah,'" "don't wear miniskirts."

The arrangements for practice-teaching vary. Some arrangements make it difficult for the student-teacher to become immersed in the school setting. In some programs, for example, the student-teacher carries a full academic load at her college while, at the same time, commuting to the school for her practice-teaching. Under this arrangement she has no time to attend staff meetings, to talk with children after class, let alone become acquainted with the community. (I know of one program that supposedly gives the student-teacher one semester of teaching experience. Yet, because of administrative problems, the experience was begun six weeks late.)

The disenchantment also includes amazement that the regular teachers, when they talk among themselves, seem so unintellectual and, even, callous about their pupils. Teachers' conversations are seen to include open nastiness about students and much talk about football and other academic trivia. There is a belief that these patterns are not merely incidental occurrences but are enforced upon every member of the group. The teacher who won't conform will have trouble.

The presence of a supervising teacher can make the student-teacher's classroom work difficult. In many a subtle way, and some ways are not subtle at all, he can make the student-teacher feel inadequate. The children, too, know what the score is and they can take advantage of the situation, especially when the supervisor has left the room. There are some gruesome stories of teacher humiliation -- of students walking out, questioning the teacher's competence, and so forth. University laboratory schools, where student-teachers are present most of the time, are apt to produce pupils who are real professionals in the fine art of harrassing young teachers. (On the other hand, in these schools one is apt to find highly expert, subject-oriented teachers and excellent technical resources for teaching.)

One of the upshots of all this is that new priorities develop. One teacher recalls his student-teaching days this way: "In your college courses on methods you have been given very idealistic notions that good teaching depends on technical competence. Then when you get out there you discover that discipline comes first and teaching second...you employ the fear principle...the teachers tell you that what you have learned doesn't work...and (various forces) try to defeat you...after the first semester you have learned, if you stay in the business, you play the

game as the classroom teacher does it, you find out who the troublemakers are...you follow (the other teachers') discipline patterns...control comes first, teaching second...I started very idealistically; by the time I actually got ready to start teaching I learned that very little teaching goes on in the public schools..." In his particular experience the practice-teachers got together informally and, in this way, gave one another support and an opportunity to discuss their woes and let off steam.

A few theoretical words are now in order. One must disentangle one's astonishment about the trauma and feelings of anger of the student-teachers and try to arrive at some objective consideration of what is going on. On the side of objectivity, then, one cannot begin by assuming that anxiety is necessarily bad; not all effective learning is free of turmoil. Also, the person undergoing a transition is not necessarily a good judge of his own needs or the social realities around him. What, then, are the functions served by the processes described so far?

Van Gennep's Rites of Passage suggests that in the process of drastic changes of social status -- when a child is accepted into adulthood, when a person marries, when a person has died -- primitive societies frequently handle the transition in a three-phased way; there is explicit separation from the previous context; there is explicit transformation of individuals' social attributes and behavior; and there is reincorporation of individuals into the social group. Each of these tends to be highlighted by the use of rituals. In the student-teaching situation there appear to be some remarkable parallels to these processes. Not only is the school-teaching context physically separated from the student-teacher's college; not only is the student-teacher supervised by a local school teacher; she is also subjected to a psychological regime of separation and transformation.

She undergoes some of the self-degrading rituals that Erving Goffman wrote about in relation to total institutions. (My implication here is that some of Goffman's processes are related not only to the nature of the "total institutions" but to the fact of moving from one social context to another -- the process of "separation" from the previous context and incorporation into a new one.) Some of the teacher's previous conceptions of herself are rudely and forcibly attacked (recall: "where do I fit? nowhere!"). All this could almost certainly be called processes of separation by Van Gennep, just as the adoption of new priorities could be called process of transformation. The sense of disenchantment and loss of idealism appear to be verbalizations of this process, a display of awareness that a fairly drastic separation and transformation process is at work. I suspect that if one interviewed the children undergoing adolescent rites of passage in primitive societies one would similarly find expression of anger, fear and uncertainty.

I do not want to offer a blanket voucher of approval to the process of transition that I described. As it stands, there appears to be a fairly harsh induction into a new role that does violence to our ethic of humaneness. It may well be that one response to the harshness is to create such lingering anger that one leaves teaching at the earliest possible moment. But possibly a more likely response is that the "shock treatment" really serves to create compliance with existing ways of doing things -- where the young teacher's idealism comes to be covered over by the need to be socially accepted in the teaching situation and to limit the punishment one is apt to receive by deviating. On the other hand, it may serve to force her to accept a reality that is simply different -- in its non-intellectuality, in its discipline problems -- from the one she was led to expect. It may be important that this reality be

acknowledged. Yet one is tempted to speculate that if the student-teacher retained her idealism she might occasionally break through the hard facts-of-life and engender a positive self-fulfilling prophecy leading to drastic improvement. The problem is how to retain idealism in the face of very real onslaughts on it from all sorts of directions -- from students as well as colleagues. The fate of idealism of the young teacher is very similar to that of novices in other occupations, such as medicine. The day-to-day life of any practitioner immersed in his occupation tends to be routine, unspectacular and, more importantly, filled with compromises. Perhaps the only way to preserve zeal is to remain, at least partially, an outsider. Perhaps one should design teacher roles that have greater professional autonomy than they now have. One way of doing this might be to encourage outside affiliations, such as participation in viable professional associations that meet away from the school and do so at frequent intervals. Such cosmopolitanism has its own dangers, of course. It is often construed as pointing to lack of loyalty to the school and, especially, to the community in which the school is located.

Finally, a few more sociological notes: 1. It was stated that teachers' informal sessions at lunch contained talk that student-teachers found very distressing -- e.g., unkind things about students. It seems that the "culture" of such groups is very similar to informal groups that exist symbiotically in other organizations, such as factories and prisons. In factories, for example, such groups tend to control the work output of members. It should not be difficult to come up with direct analogies to some of these studies. It is a safe guess that there exist pressures among teachers to control one anothers' classroom behavior. The surprising thing is that these do not appear to be systematic studies of

teacher-subcultures. 2. The student-teaching situation appears to contain only the first two of Van Gennep's stages (separation and transformation). The third, reincorporation, appears to happen only as the teacher begins her regular teaching job or if the student-teaching period lasts at least a year. 3. Finally, it seems that in the practice teaching context the teacher is encouraged to recognize and come to terms with the fact that some of her ideals are sheer mythology. Recognizing mythology in one's beliefs without being completely disenchanted and demoralized is probably a crucial point in any role transition. Van Gennep notes that at some point in adolescent rites of passage the child realizes that the witches and spirits are really his relatives. Now childhood is truly at an end and the acceptance of adulthood is at hand. Similarly, the teacher's realization of mythology in her past beliefs probably makes her ready to accept new beliefs and new responsibilities. It should not be thought that at this point the individual suddenly becomes utterly rational. I suspect that at this point she is likely to look for new myths to sustain her. In the school these may center on the need to put discipline ahead of academics. The point is that a drastic break with the past is at hand, and new options become plausible and accessible to the individual.

From a practical point of view it would be well to know how severe a jolt the "transformation" deals to the indoctrination that took place in the teacher training colleges: which items survive intact; which are temporarily submerged, which are destroyed?

I hope I have offered some suggestive thoughts.

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